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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-fourth session
Working Group on Minorities
Eighth session
27-31 May 2002

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Note by the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The establishment of the Working Group on Minorities was recommended by the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in its resolution 1994/4 of 19 August 1994 and authorized by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1995/24 of 3 March 1995, in which it called upon the Sub-Commission to examine, as a matter of priority, ways and means to promote and protect effectively the rights of persons belonging to minorities as set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 18 December 1992. For that purpose it authorized the Sub-Commission to establish an intersessional working group. This resolution was subsequently endorsed by the Economic an [4] Social Council in its resolution 1995/31 of 25 July 1995. By decision 1998/246 of 30 July 1998, the Economic and Social Council extended the mandate of the Working Group with a view to its holding one session of five working days annually.

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2. The eighth session of the Working Group is scheduled to be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 27 to 31 May 2002.

1. Adoption of the agenda

3. The provisional agenda for the eighth session of the Working Group contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/1 includes items on the promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities as set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1995/24, requested the Working Group to give priority consideration to the three main items contained in paragraph 9 of that resolution, namely:

(a) To review the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;

(b) To examine possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments;

(c) To recommend further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

4. In accordance with the above-mentioned paragraph, the Working Group decided to consider the issues in the following order at its present session: reviewing the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; examining possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments; recommending further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; the future role of the Working Group; and other matters.

2. Organization of work

5. At its sixth session, the Working Group decided to rationalize the agenda and that the number of meetings for each agenda item would be as follows: three meetings for agenda item 3 (a); three meetings for agenda item 3 (b); and three meetings for agenda item 3 (c) (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/27, para. 115).

3 (a) Reviewing the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Manual on Minorities

6. The English version of the *UN Guide for Minorities* has been published and is also available on the OHCHR web site (http://www.unhchr.ch/html/racism/01-minoritiesguide.html). The other five United Nations official language versions are in preparation.

Information gathering on minorities

7. Pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/55, the High Commissioner for Human Rights transmitted a note verbale to States Members of the United Nations and Observer States, as well as intergovernmental and several non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, requesting information on how best to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The texts of the replies received as of February 2002 are contained in document E/CN.4/2002/91/Add.1 and Add.2.

3 (b) Examining possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments

and

3 (c) Recommending further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

Development of regional networks and promoting regional cooperation

8. At its seventh session, the Working Group took note with satisfaction of the planned regional seminars regarding the implementation of the Declaration. In this regard, a third regional workshop on multiculturalism in Africa was organized in Gaborone from 18 to 22 February 2002. The report of the workshop is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/4.

9. Two meetings on Afro-descendant issues were organized. The Conference on the Rights of Minorities of African Descent in the Americas was organized in Montreal, Canada from 27 to 30 September 2001 by the Association for Canadian Studies. The report is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/WP.2. OHCHR organized a regional seminar on Afro-descendants in La Ceiba, Honduras, from 21 to 24 March 2002. The report is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/5.

Right to effective participation of minorities in the society of which they form a part

10. At its seventh session, the following themes were selected by the Working Group for in-depth discussion at its eighth session: (a) further reflections on autonomist and integrative approaches to minority protection in multicultural society; and (b) focusing on national development policies, international development cooperation and the rights of minorities (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/2001/22, page 39, para. 4). In this regard, the Working Group entrusted Mr. Asbjørn Eide with the task of preparing a paper on the first theme (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/3). Working papers regarding integrative and autonomist solutions have also been prepared by Mr. Tom Hadden (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/WP.5) and by the Danish Centre for Human Rights (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/WP.4). A working paper on relevant jurisprudence at regional level has also been prepared by Mr. Geoff Gilbert (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/WP.6). In addition, the Working Group will have before it the working paper on development issues prepared by Minority Rights Group International (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/WP.2).

11. At its seventh session, the Working Group took note of the planned International Seminar on Cooperation for the Better Protection of the Rights of Minorities to be held in Durban, South Africa, on 1, 2 and 5 September 2001 in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/52 and Economic and Social Council decision 2000/269. The seminar duly took place and the report is contained in document E/CN.4/2002/92.

12. At the invitation of the Government, the Working Group conducted its first country visit, to the Republic of Mauritius from 7 to 10 September 2001. The report of the country visit is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2002/2.

4. The future role of the Working Group

13. At its seventh session, the Working Group discussed the following issues: retaining the main structure of the agenda with a better focus on the discussion of each session; the question of a database; the policy of posting working papers on the web site; and the holding of regional seminars.

5. Other matters

14. Under this item, members of the Working Group may consider a range of issues relating to its mandate and activities.